PROTECTING CHILDREN IN A DIGITAL WORLD

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN IRAQ

Iraq faces an urgent child protection crisis as children encounter growing and rapidly evolving threats in the digital world. Iraq is associated with one of the world's highest volumes of reported child sexual abuse material, and children are at high risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. Gaps in legislation, protection systems, and digital literacy leave children vulnerable and families, educators, and caregivers ill-equipped to protect them.

SEED's Preventing and Responding to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Iraq Program, funded by Safe Online from December 2024 to May 2026, transformed awareness of technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse (TF-CSEA) into coordinated action, mobilizing government, civil society, service providers, communities, and families across Iraq and the Kurdistan Region to better prevent abuse, protect children, and respond to survivors

+5.8 million

NCMEC CyberTipline reports associated with Iraq (2019–2025)
— among the highest globally

A WHOLE SYSTEMS RESPONSE

SEED's program connected family-based prevention, policy reform, national coordination, and institutional strengthening to improve accountability and protect children both in online spaces and when harm continues or transitions into the offline world.

National Coordination

Mobilized national momentum through Iraq's only coordination mechanism dedicated to strengthening prevention of and response to online violence.

Stronger Laws and Systems

Advanced child-protection & cybercrime legislation, institutional responsibilities, practical guidance, and coordination across government and civil society.

Training and Capacity

Equipped law enforcement, service providers, and NGOs to prevent harm and deliver survivor-centered responses.

Awareness and Prevention

Helped children, families, and communities recognize digital risks, prevent exploitation, and respond safely.

SEED HAS DELIVERED

Laws and Systems

Mobilized federal and regional leadership to advance cybercrime legislation and strengthen draft Child Protection Laws in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

Policy Brief: Developed and advocated for policy and legislative recommendations to establish a comprehensive legal and institutional framework.



Tools for Practitioners

Practitioner's Guide for Online Violence:
Iraq's first standardized framework for coordinated, survivor-centered responses to online violence.



Judicial Briefer:
Guidance strengthening children's access to justice and judicial responses to online sexual exploitation and abuse.



Child-Friendly Checklist:
Practical guidance helping police, social services, and educators respond safely and consistently to affected children.



Faith-Based Messages: Accessible guidance and messaging for Muslim faith leaders to raise awareness and encourage prevention of TF-CSEA



Prevention & Awareness

Connected Safely Toolkit:
Developed Iraq's first awareness and prevention toolkit for NGOs to support children and their families to be safer online



National and International Leadership

Iraq Online Violence Task Force:
Lead the national task force connecting 97 members across civil society, government, universities, and UN agencies to strengthen the prevention of and response to online violence.

Advisory Boards:
Contributed expertise to international research and advocacy through UNICEF and UNFPA advisory groups for Kurdistan Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

Training and Capacity Building

Trained 81 government actors, including 39 law enforcement officers and 42 officials and service providers, in relevant legal frameworks, digital investigations, survivors-centered responses, and child-centered justice.

83% of trainees demonstrated increased knowledge and skills in identifying, preventing, investigating, and responding to TF-CSEA

Equipped 37 service providers from 19 NGOs with specialized skills to identify and respond to TF-CSEA cases safely.

94% improved their knowledge and practices in responding to survivors and raising awareness about online risks

THE WAY FORWARD (2026–2027)

Secure comprehensive legal and institutional framework

Advance federal and regional online violence and child protection legislation and for mandated lead agencies

Expand training across Iraq and the SWANA region

Equip practitioners to deliver Connected Safely in communities, and train NGO staff in prevention and response

Lead national coordination

Chair the Iraq Online Violence Task Force for a unified national response to online violence and continue partnership with IGF Kurdistan and Iraq.

Contribute expertise globally

Provide technical leadership through UNICEF Innocenti's advisory group, Internet Governance Forum, and WeProtect Global Alliance, among other advocacy platforms

SEED is a women-led, local organization in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq creating a future where everyone can thrive. We promote gender equality, protect children, combat human trafficking, and support mental health and well-being. Through services, partnerships, and system strengthening, we work alongside communities and institutions to create lasting change.

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